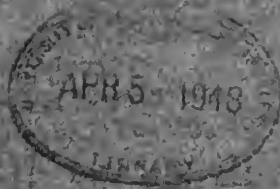


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REPORT
ON
LABOR SITUATION
of
NORWAY

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OF
NORWAY

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LABOR SITUATION IN NORWAY

History Before the War

The political labor movement in Norway, which began before the purely trades-union movement, dates from the revolutionary wave which swept over Europe in 1848. Marcus Thrane, the founder of the movement in Norway, and other leaders were arrested in 1851, and all action put an end to for some years.

But in 1881, when a liberal party came into control of the ministry, the Social-Democrats organized a party of their own, with an official organ for the spreading of propaganda. Out of this, in 1887, the Norwegian Labor Party (Norak Arbeiderparti) was formed. Although for the first few years it was not avowedly socialistic, in 1891 it came out on a straight socialistic platform. It made demands for disarmament and it generally opposed the government's military program. The essence of the argument for disarmament is Norway's geographical situation in respect to Europe, and the peculiar burden which militarism places on the laboring classes. The peaceful settlement of the separation from Sweden in 1905 gave this group new strength, and in 1909 the party convention declared itself in favor of complete disarmament, of Norway's declaring her permanent neutrality, and of abolishing all military service. This program remained unquestioned until 1914.

The party first took part in an election in 1894, when it polled only 700 votes. In 1909 it polled over 91,000, and in the recent elections of October, 1918, it polled over 300,000. Its greatest strength is among the industrial workers in the cities. It published a political organ—The Social-demokraten—at Christiania, which, it is estimated, has a circulation of about 31,000. It also maintains several weeklies and dailies and conducts an evening school at Christiania for propaganda purposes. It participates in the maintenance of several labor lyceums throughout the country, and maintains special woman auxiliary organizations of several thousand members. There are as yet no women members of the Storting, but women have seats in rural town governments.

Trades-Unionism

The first Trade-Union in Norway—the typographers—was founded in 1884. In 1899 a national federation composed of about 20,000 members, organized in 75 locals, was formed. The following year, however, the employers organized an association which has become very strong. In 1916 it had reached a strength of 89,000 members, or over 1,600

establishments. The economic crisis of 1909 reduced the membership of the union and very considerably reduced the funds, as the unions supported the great strikes in Sweden of that year. Since 1910, however, the strength of the federation has increased. In 1911 it began the organization of seamen and agricultural labor—a very large part of the labor of the country. The principal efforts of the federation have been directed toward increasing wages, shortening hours, and the making of collective agreements for longer periods. The present membership is reported at about 100,000.

History Since the War: Labor Party

In 1914, just before the war, the Conservative party, compelled the Liberal group in the Government to introduce a series of military appropriations, with the result that the Social-Democratic group found themselves obliged to declare their views on disarmament. The Chairman, Holerman-Knudsen, and the Secretary, Magnus Nielson, explained that the party program meant immediate disarmament as soon as it could secure the necessary parliamentary majority, while the minority within the party, represented by Bonnevie and Bergerson, dissented. This aroused considerable discussion in the Press, but the majority declared itself against Bonnevie's point of view.

The matter became a burning question again late in 1914, upon the declaration of the European war. Inasmuch as the Social-Democratic group in parliament voted for the Government asking for the appropriation of fifteen million crowns for the preservation of its neutrality, this vote of the party group was considered as a breach of its principles and was violently assailed in the press and in public meetings. Apparently if Bonnevie's group triumphed there would be necessary a revision of the party program, or at least a concise and binding interpretation of the party's military program. A special committee was created, consisting of representatives from the party, from the trade-unions, and Representative Bonnevie. The majority in its report was in favor of the abolition of militarism, and declared that the program of the Norwegian Labor Party meant complete disarmament as soon as the necessary parliamentary majority could put it through. Bonnevie, of the minority, took the point of view already referred to, that is, disarmament based upon international exigencies.

The majority of the Committee explained the grounds of its demand at length, as opposed to all military defense because it is the crudest expression of the capitalistic system of society. From purely financial, technical and social grounds, Norway should disarm.

At the Convention in the spring of 1918 the majority report was accepted.

The party convention went further in its radicalism, so that its

present program is disarmament, permanent neutrality, compulsory and binding arbitration, and "direct action" against militarism, taking such shape as military service and mobilization strikes, as well as prohibiting its parliamentary representatives from voting for appropriations for the maintenance of so-called neutrality.

In a word, the Norwegian Labor Party during the period of the world war has, without equivocation, expressed its complete negation of measures of defense, and that it is not only in complete opposition to all militarism, but likewise against the very principle of national defense. The party will work therefore for its program, both through parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means.

Trades-Unions

Besides the question of disarmament, labor has had two sources of dissatisfaction, here as in so many other countries: The increased cost of living and the question of compulsory arbitration of labor disputes. As to the first, the Government appointed a Committee which reported that by the end of 1917, while wages had increased 40%, living expenses had increased 100%. The compulsory arbitration act of 1916 arranged for a board of two workmen, two employers and a Government official as chairman. In protest against this a general strike was declared, but it lasted only about five days, when the men went back to work.

On the whole, the trades-unions movement has maintained its pre-war conservative features, in striking contrast to the radicalism of the Labor Party, but this conservatism is by no means unanimous. There is a strong radical group in the trades-unions favoring direct action, the general strike, and sabotage as the weapons of labor.

The test of the strength of these two opposing elements within the movement came to a head at the Convention of October 25-27, 1917. Discussion of the form of organization and the future tactics of the trades-union movement consumed six of the eight days of the Convention. According to the view of the minority representatives, *i.e.*, the syndicalists, the labor movement must strive not only for the improvement of the condition of the laborer within the capitalistic organization, but must also seek to destroy the capitalistic method of organization, and by taking over the means of production and distribution introduce a socialistic method of organization. This, it is declared, involves a change in the tactics of the trade union. Instead of organizing central federations they should adopt the purely federated form of organization, with emphasis upon the local division. Freedom of contract must always exist, and therefore there must be no collective agreements.

The Trade Union Congress of the preceding year (1916) had

established a Committee of fifteen persons, to consider questions of the method of organization and tactics to be employed. This Committee laid before the convention two resolutions of contrary intent; the one for the continuance of the present form of constitution and for the trade union movement, and signed by eleven members of the committee; the second from the syndicalistic point of view and signed by four members. The resolution of the majority of the committee was immediately adopted by the convention, by a vote of 208 to 71. This division of the votes continued through the proceedings dealing with the minor points involved. In general the vote was as 3 to 1 in favor of the older and better recognized form of organization and trade union methods of action.

In some unions control has been secured by the syndicalists. Thus, according to newspaper report of January 8th, 1918, the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation, one of the largest within the National Federation of Trade Unions, formed a Council of Workers. This Council of Workers demanded: (1) that the State should seize all stores of necessities of life; (2) that all military training be done away with; (3) that in order to effect this Councils of Workers should be set up in every town and district.

At a meeting of the committees of all the labor and socialist associations in Christiania these resolutions were adopted, the first two by plurality, the third by a majority.

On August 31, 1918, at a meeting of the Norwegian Laborers' Federation, the largest one within the National Federation, a resolution was passed altering the organization to suit syndicalistic principles. The Norwegian Laborers' Federation in July, 1918, comprised 26,372 members or 26% of the total membership of the National Federation of Trade Unions.

New Policy of the Norwegian Labor Party.

Back of the change in policy of the Labor party outlined above lay the hardships brought about by increasing cost of living in Norway. Tranmael, the leader of the radical wing, demanded that war wages be brought to a pre-war level and in case of failure of the party to secure that demand use should be made of the general strike, sabotage, boycott, together with a general resistance to military service.

At the convention of the party late in March, 1918, two resolutions were laid before it from the Executive Council. The report of the minority of the Executive Committee was accepted by the Convention and was as follows:

"As a revolutionary party in the class struggle, the Social-

Democracy cannot acknowledge the right of the property-owning classes to profit economically from the oppression of the working classes, whether or not such profit and oppression are supported by the majority of the representatives of the people.

"The Norwegian Labor Party must therefore insist on its right to employ revolutionary mass action in the struggle for the economic freedom of the working classes.

The Convention, however, is of the opinion that the Norwegian Labor Party, as a political party, in the first instance must work to secure control of the political power through the elections.

"But the party cannot maintain its indifference to the struggle which is being carried on by other workmen's organizations. The Convention welcomes, therefore, the creation of a workmen's and soldiers' council (Arbeider-og soldateraad).

"The Convention therefore wishes to express its sympathy, with the demands regarding the increased cost of living which have been presented by the Conference of Workmen's Councils, as well as the claims which the principal labor organizations have raised, and urges the members of the party to support action in the matter of the high cost of living which the workingmen may take up through their organization.

"Furthermore, the Convention earnestly directs the workmen of the country to assemble at the elections to the Storting in the fall, in a single and mighty effort to strike down the civic reaction and to secure political control." This resolution was signed by the following committee members: Olav Scheflo, Eivind Reirersen, Henrik Berg, Martin Trammael, Kyrre Grepp, and John Aalberg.

In reviewing the above change in the policy and tactics of the party, Ole O. Lian, Secretary of the National Trade Union Federation, and editor of its official organ, expresses the fear that the labor movement may not react successfully from the effect of this change in policy toward greater violence and extreme radicalism. He points out that it is a violation of the fundamental principle of the Social-Democracy which rests upon the rule of the majority.

Johan Castberg, who is at present one of the three members in the Storting representing the radical people's party, sometimes termed the Labor Democratic Party, thus interprets the situation:

"It was reported today that at the National Convention of the Socialists the so-called young socialists, syndicalists, have triumphed, a change which fore-

casts revolution in a country which has universal suffrage, a change which would go beyond parliamentary means. I am of the opinion that we shall find reason for such an occurrence. Our people is not a people without respect to law and right. If this does occur, it will not happen merely because of the contagion from the East; Sweden lies between us, and Sweden retains its parliamentary course firmly within the Social-Democracy. We shall see, in so far as it is given to understand passing events which are not to be denied, that the manner in which the increasing cost of living, with its enormous profits for a few, has been met in our country, has in many ways created bitterness, and that this fact will be made use of by elements which are not particularly earnest or conscientious in the country's interest. But that may be as it is: it is certain, however, that either there will be a break in the Social-Democratic party—which I cannot believe—or that there will not be a break, in which case there will be a mass of radical people in our country who will not prefer to use illegal methods, which will not care to go beyond parliamentary means. With this situation before us there is great significance in the fact that there is a real radical party in the country which clearly and frankly follows parliamentary lines and desires a democratic development on a national basis, according to the conditions prevailing in the country."

Economic and Political Demands.

The principal demands of the labor and socialist movement concerned the high cost of living and unemployment. During the war labor has demanded: (1) abolition of 'home work'; (2) representation upon home workers' board which it secured in October, 1918; (3) abolition of use of military forces in suppression of strikes at Sulitjelma; (4) increase in bread ration; (5) eight-hour working day; (6) abolition of compulsory arbitration in industrial disputes; (7) maximization of the prices of all necessities; (8) prevention of hoarding; and (9) greater production of the necessities by calling of those in military service; (10) extension of State and municipal public works to combat unemployment; (11) increase in subsidies to unemployment funds; (12) regulation of raw materials for manufacturing purposes with a view to stabilizing employment; (13) subsidies to producers to offset increasing prices of all necessities.

Early in 1918 (Feb. 9) a joint meeting of representatives of the executive committee of the Labor Party, the National Trade Union Federation, and the Socialist group in the Storting made the following specific demands upon the government in relation to the high cost of living:—

1. Commandeering or licensing of all the principal articles of commerce, such that there may be realized complete control over production on the part of society and on the importation and distribution of necessities, according to need and irrespective of purchasing power.

Immediate rationing of butter, potatoes, vegetables, pork and other meats, as well as effective distribution of milk, so that these products may not be withdrawn from that part of the public having the least purchasing power.

Effective regulation of the fish catch in order to supply people with cheap fish in sufficient quantities to substitute for other necessities which are lacking.

All establishments should be required to install canteens, or see to it that some other method of serving warm food, under co-operation with the municipal Food Administration, be provided, in order that all workers may be assured a meal in a warm room.

Subsidies, so that in addition to the grants which are now given to keep down prices of flour and fish, there may be brought about a reduction in the price of other necessities.

Fixation of maximum prices on all necessities, including thereunder building material, on the basis of the services rendered to society.

All the sales of these necessities shall take place by or through the State or the Food Administration, under whose control distribution shall take place, in order to prevent circumvention of the maximum prices or withholding the products for speculative purposes.

A ration of bread and flour in town and country, with addition for persons doing heavy work.

2. In order to promote the highest degree of production of necessities, all persons doing military service to be called in 1918, and measures for the defense of neutrality be limited to the obvious necessities.

The municipalities of the State may commandeer ground which is not satisfactorily and sufficiently used by the private owner and either operate this itself directly, or give access to the ground to one who is willing to cultivate it by himself.

All supplies of commodities held for military purposes shall be directed to the services of necessary production.

3. For the prevention and combatting of unemployment all State and municipal work shall be extended and undertaken to the extent determined by the necessities of unemployment.

Adequate appropriation for these purposes on the part of the State.

Increase of the public subsidies to unemployment funds, so that the unemployed may receive adequate support.

Regulation of raw materials for manufacturing purposes, and limitation of the hours of labor in such a way that uniform employment may be maintained as long as possible.

4. Adequate State subsidies to all municipal institutions created to offset the high cost of living.

5. Municipalities to be granted State subsidies and assistance and provided loans at low rates for the construction of houses for homeless families of workmen and of the middle classes.

Increase of the limit of tax exemption and opportunity for municipalities to levy a surtax upon large undertakings and property holdings, for distribution among the institutions which have been set up to combat the effect of high cost of living.

TABLE I
ELECTIONS TO THE NORWEGIAN STORTING, 1909-1918
 (Statistisk Aarbok for Kongeriket Norge, 1915, pp. 136-137.)

| Year | Total No. Voting | No. of Women Voting of Total | No. of Legal Votes Counted | Conservative and Liberals | Votes Cast by Parties | | |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | | | Left or Radicals | Labor- democratic | Social- democratic |
| 1918 | | | | 258,073 | | 223,872 | 216,558 |
| 1915 | 671,293 | 304,278 | 663,028 | 179,028 | 204,243 | 25,658 | 198,111 |
| 1912 | 533,182 | 187,624 | 526,905 | 162,074 | 195,526 | | 128,455 |
| 1909 | 490,246 | 162,928 | 483,021 | 175,388 | 128,367 | 15,550 | 91,268 |

The representation of the different parties in the Norwegian Storting in 1917 and 1918 has been as follows:

| Party Groups | Number of Members | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------|
| | 1918 | 1917 |
| Right and Liberals..... | 49 | 21 |
| Left (Radicals) | 52 | 74 |
| Labor Democrats | 3 | 6 |
| Socialists (Labor Party)..... | 18 | 19 |
| Agrarian Federation | 3 | — |
| Independent | 1 | 3 |

TABLE II
MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE-UNIONS IN NORWAY AFFILIATED WITH
THE NATIONAL LABOR FEDERATION, 1916
(Statistisk Aarbok for Kongeriket Norge, 1917, p. 108.)

| Unions | Number, Dec. 31, 1916 | | Member- ship 1918 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------------------|
| | Local Unions | Membership | |
| Laborers' Federation | 347 | 20,465 | 26,372 |
| Bakery and Confectionery Workers..... | 56 | 1,777 | 1,643 |
| Barbers and Hair Dressers..... | 4 | 110 | 310 |
| Bookbinders | 13 | 1,233 | 1,565 |
| Book Printers | 47 | 3,023 | 3,243 |
| Moulders | 42 | 1,720 | 1,811 |
| Goldsmiths | 6 | 627 | 685 |
| Harbor and Transport Workers..... | 45 | 3,538 | 5,910 |
| Iron and Metal Workers..... | 116 | 17,002 | 20,670 |
| Drivers and Truckers..... | 14 | 990 | — |
| Butchers | 11 | 253 | 520 |
| Lithographers | 7 | 555 | 485 |
| Painters (houses, etc)..... | 30 | 1,236 | 1,314 |
| Seamen | 10 | 1,707 | 1,503 |
| Stone and Brick Masons..... | 40 | 1,809 | 1,933 |
| Furniture Workers | 35 | 1,440 | 1,649 |
| Paper Industry Workers..... | 79 | 6,550 | 6,667 |
| Sadlers and Upholsterers..... | 11 | 335 | 475 |
| Saw and Planing Mill Workers..... | 42 | 3,516 | 4,566 |
| Leather Workers | 13 | 232 | 360 |
| Forestry and Agriculture..... | 27 | 1,041 | 3,027 |
| Boot and Shoe Workers..... | 30 | 1,998 | 2,467 |
| Tailors | 27 | 1,172 | 2,012 |
| Street Railway Employees..... | 7 | 758 | 1,030 |
| Stone Cutters | 26 | 644 | 717 |
| Fisherman (Aales Local)..... | — | — | 150 |
| Tobacco Workers | 9 | 894 | 1,007 |
| Hosiery and Knit Goods..... | 2 | 215 | 150 |
| Wood Workers | 83 | 5,656 | 7,279 |
| Other trades | 5 | 132 | 171 |
| <hr/> | | | <hr/> |
| Total 1918 | | | 99,721 |
| " 1916 | 1,184 | 80,628 | |
| " 1915 | 1,096 | 77,968 | |
| " 1914 | 1,039 | 67,235 | |

The strongest Union belonging to the National Federation of Trade Unions in Norway is the Laborers' Federation, comprising 347 local unions with a membership of 20,465.

The second largest federation is that of the iron and metal workers—116 unions with a membership of 17,002.

The workers in the paper industry comprise 79 unions and a membership of 6,500.

Method of Organization.

The Unions are organized in the form of locals. There are also local and district federations, culminating in a National Federation. The Unions are essentially craft unions. In some instances the occupational or trade lines have not been closely drawn and considerable industrial unionism has developed. This is true in the case of the iron, steel and metal workers, workers in the paper industry, and the laborers' federation, made up of unskilled workers in various industries. Centralization characterizes the movement. The cohesive element is found in the strike and mutual benefit fund carried by the National Federation, through the various locals. The highest legislative authority in the federation is the National Congress or convention which meets bi-annually. The principal governing body is the Board of Delegates or representatives which meets semi-annually. Current work of the federation is conducted by an executive committee composed of the president, vice president, treasurer and secretaries and two representatives from the Labor Party Committee.

The National Federation of Trade Unions is affiliated with the International Trade Union movement. The political counterpart of the National Federation is the Labor Party with which it maintains very close affiliation. As a consequence of this affiliation of the Trade Unions with the political party organization, several of the unions have not affiliated with the National Federation of Trade Unions. These have deemed the political affiliation sufficient to advance their larger political interests. The affiliation of the Trade Union movement with the Labor Party is effected by the joint representation upon each other's executive committee. The Norwegian Trade Union Federation also meets in joint conferences representatives of the Labor movement of the other two Scandinavian countries, with whom close affiliation has been maintained since as early as 1886.

TABLE III.

1. LEADERS OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The president of the General Federation of Trade Unions is Ole O. Iian, who is also a social-democratic member of Parliament and a member of the Executive Committee of the Norwegian Labor Party.

Among leaders of the different Unions may be named the following:

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Laborers' Federation (Arbeidamandsforbundet) | Rich. Hansen |
| Bakers and Confectioners' Federation (Baker-og Konditorforbundet) | Johan Nygaard |
| Barbers', etc., Federation (Barber-og Frisorav. Forbund) | Henrik Fjeld |
| Bookbinders' Federation (Bokbinder Forbundet) | Hans Aas |
| Central Union of Bookbinders (Centraltoreningen for Boktrykkere) | O. Rund |
| Moulders' Federation (Former Forbundet) | Ludv. Johansen |
| Goldsmiths' Federation (Guldsmedarbeider forbundet) | E. Gabrielsen |
| Harbor and Transport Workers' Federation (Havne-og Transportarbeiderforb) | A. Knudsen |
| Slaughter-house Workers' Union (Kjøtindustriarbeider forbundet) | H. Haffaahl |
| Lithographers' Federation (Litografisk forbund) | Rob Köpp |
| Painters' Federation (Maler forbundet) | J. M. Winge |
| Steam Engineers' and Firemen's Union (Matros-og fyrb. union) | Gerh. Gulbrandsen |
| Masons Federation (Murer forbundet) | Aksel Schultz |
| Furniture Workers' Federation (Möbelindustriarbeider forbundet) | Chr. Systad |
| Paper Industries Workers' Federation (Papirindustriarbeider forbundet) | A. Bratvold |
| Sadlery and Upholsterers' Federation (Safeln.-og Tapetserer forbundet) | J. P. Johnson |
| Sawmill and Planing Mill Workers' Federation (Sag-tomt-og Hovleriarb forbundet) | M. Westbye |
| Forest and Agricultural Workers' Federation (Skog-og Jordbruksarbeider forbundet) | M. Liengsn |
| Boot and Shoe Workers' Federation (Skotoiarbeider forbundet) | A. E. Guendersen |
| Tailors' Federation (Skrasdder forbundet) | P. Lange |
| Street Railway Employees' Federation (Sporveis forbundet) | E. E. Rudlang |
| Stone Cutters' Federation (Stenhugger forbundet) | Alfr. Pahls |
| Tobacco Workers' Federation (Tobakerbeider forbundet) | Hj. Johansen |
| Hosiery and Knit Goods Workers' Federation (Trikotagearbeiderskernes forbundet) | Magna Hansen |
| Wood Workers' Federation (Traearbeider forbundet) | H. Pattersen |

2. LEADERS OF THE PARTY

The Secretary of the party is Magnus Neilssen. Among its leading members in the Storting are Christian H. Knudsen, Jacob Vindnes, A. Buen, Christian Nornsrud. These were its principal leaders until early in 1918 when they lost power within the party. Those gaining membership under the new and more radical policy of the party are: Martin Trammael, Olav Scheflo, Eivand Rierersen, Henrik Berg, Kyrre Grepp and John Aalberg.

Conclusion

The Norwegian Labor Party is the only one of the Scandinavian labor parties the control of which has fallen to the radical elements—those favoring so-called mass action and the general strike. At the same time the new party control concedes the necessity of working with parliamentary means as well as employing economic action. It is quite well known that the party leaders tempered their former extreme utterances and spoke with much greater reserve on the eve of the October, 1918, elections. The extent of their parliamentary radicalism will consist merely perhaps in refusing to cooperate with the Liberal Party group in the Government, and to insist upon working independently until they obtain their own majority at the elections, and thereby secure control of the ministry. Methods of violence and revolution will undoubtedly be avoided, provided always, however, that economic conditions remain reasonably stable.





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